



University of Toronto
FACULTY OF MUSIC

ORFORD STRING QUARTET

ANDREW DAWES, *violin*

TERENCE HELMER, *viola*

KENNETH PERKINS, *violin*

MARCEL ST-CYR, *cello*

Concert Hall, Edward Johnson Building

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1972 AT 8:30 P.M.

The following program may be regarded as an exploration into the evolution of the string quartet viewed from the present--where extreme limits of sound possibilities are employed--back to the eighteenth century, when classical 'Idiomatic' string quartet writing first began.

BLACK ANGELS (Thirteen Images from the Dark Land) George Crumb
for Electronic String Quartet

George Crumb was born in Charleston, West Virginia in 1929. "Black Angels," he writes, "was conceived as a kind of parable on our troubled contemporary world. The numerous quasi-programmatic allusions in the work are therefore symbolic, although the essential polarity--God vs Devil--implies more than a purely metaphysical reality. The image of the 'black angel' was a conventional device used by early painters to symbolize the fallen angel.

"The underlying structure is a huge arch-like design which is suspended from the three 'Threnody' pieces. The work portrays a voyage of the soul. The three stages of this voyage are Departure (fall from grace), Absence (spiritual annihilation), and Return (redemption).

"The numerological symbolism of Black Angels, while perhaps not immediately perceptible to the ear, is nonetheless quite faithfully reflected in the musical structure. These 'magical' relationships are variously expressed --e.g. in terms of phrase-length, groupings for single notes, durations, patterns of repetition, etc. An important pitch element in the work -- ascending D#, A, E also symbolizes the fateful numbers 7 and 13. At certain points in the score there occurs a kind of ritualistic counting in various languages."

Crumb has been especially attracted to the power of the musical quotation. By means of particularly evocative and haunting allusions to tonal music in Black Angels, he summons up those "ancient voices". Moments from Schubert's "Death and the Maiden" quartet; an original Sarabanda; sustained B-Major tonality of 'God music'; several references to the Latin Hymn Dies Irae; as well as conventional musical symbolism such as the Diabolus in musica (the eerie interval of the tritone) and the spooky Trillo di diavolo ("The Devil's Trill" after Tartini) all join in this cosmic surrealist piece. These symbols are further enhanced by the amplification of the

instruments, low pedal notes, bowing on the 'wrong' side of the strings (viol-consort effect), maracas, tam-tams (danse macabre) and water-tuned glasses played with a bow.

The score is inscribed: "finished on Friday the thirteenth, March 1970 (in tempore belli)"

INTERMISSION

QUARTET IN E FLAT MAJOR, OP.51

Dvorak

Dvorak's quartet, written in the 'Slavonic' style and completed in 1879, is one of the most attractive of his mature chamber works. These later works were continually infused with the spirit of his native Bohemian folk-music. Dvorak's method of composition in this style was not so much dependent on the use of existing folk tunes, but rather focussed on the invention of folk-like elements such as peculiar regional dance rhythms and the imitation of peasant instruments. The skocna melody type in quick duple time may be found in the first and last movements, while the dumka with its alternating melancholy and furiant sections is heard in the second movement. Fascinating is the guitar-like effect imitated by the pizzicato cello for the melancholy segment of that dumka. In the third movement entitled 'Romance', a lyrical expression of warmth and tenderness is articulated by an accordin-like passage. These two particular instances of imitative evocation may be viewed as minor explorations into new sound possibilities of string instruments.

QUARTET IN G MAJOR, K. 387

Mozart

Mozart's "Haydn" quartets, written in 1785 (K.387 is the first of these) stand as a monument to the esteem in which Mozart held Haydn. Probably Mozart was referring to Haydn's op. 33 of 1781 when he said "from Haydn I first learned how to compose a quartet". At any rate, Mozart felt that these were "fruits of long and arduo toil" because they were not for the public, but rather for his revered mentor.

It was at this time that the so-called idiomatic classical string quartet had fully ripened and this process was governed by the over-riding aesthetic principle of contrast. In the opening theme, two types of melodic fragments occur--basic intervals (4th or 5th) or simple chordal outlines are contrasted with a short chromatic or step-wise motion. •

This particular dichotomy of motifs is a consistent feature of the quartet.

Dynamics, too, are contrasted, most effectively in the second movement (marked 3/4) where the quick shift from piano to forte changes the accent to 2/4 for a moment (this effect is known as 'hemiola'). Another point of contrast in the second movement (which is, incidentally, a minuet and trio--normally found as the third movement) is the shift from the major to the minor mode for the trio section.

A song-like third movement presents motifs which, when restated, are given a chromatic, mysterious twist. The finale brings into contrast a learned double fugue and a flippant quasi-opera tune. These elements are woven into a masterly sonata form and the whole movement is reminiscent of the finale of Mozart's last symphony, the "Jupiter". (Program notes by Dorith Cooper)

NEXT EVENT: THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1972

ENTERTAINMENT FOR ELIZABETH - THE NEW YORK PRO MUSICA